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SIPDIS

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TAGS: OTRA MARR NATO PARM PINS PREL PGOV GM AF IR
SUBJECT: WESTERWELLE ON AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, TAC NUKEs

Classified By: Classified by Political M-C George Glass for reasons 1.4
(b,d).

¶1. (C) German FM Westerwelle told Amb February 5 that it was important to refocus Afghanistan efforts on civilian reconstruction; that we needed to avoid suggesting German troops engaged in less risk than other countries; that he did not invite Iranian FM Mottaki to Germany or seek a meeting with him; that any discussion of non-strategic nuclear weapons needed to be conducted at 28 at NATO; and that he could not influence any decision by the European Parliament on the SWIFT agreement. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador asked about Westerwelle's first 100 days in office. Though in an ebullient mood, Westerwelle said things were very difficult (FDP slipped another percentage point in the polls hours before the meeting). He said he had been in France February 4 for a joint cabinet meeting, but that nothing substantive came of it. He observed that one never really knew what was going to happen with Sarkozy involved.

AFGHANISTAN

¶3. (C) The Ambassador reviewed his own recent trip to Afghanistan. He shared his impression that the Germans were doing a superb job at all levels from the RC-North commander on down. He learned how critical mentoring and partnering with Afghan security forces had become. He noted that the U.S. was sending substantial forces to RC-North, where they would conduct training and be under German command. Westerwelle responded that this was important for Germany and for international cooperation. The Ambassador added that the U.S. was sending substantial helicopter support as well. He said that Germans could be proud of their troops in Afghanistan. Westerwelle responded that this was good news. He said that the London Conference bore an excellent conclusion, and was particularly useful for its focus on civilian progress. He emphasized the importance of underscoring civilian reconstruction.

¶4. (C) With a request for confidentiality, Westerwelle referred to the January 20 "Bild Zeitung" interview with General McChrystal, in which the general is quoted as urging the Germans to take more risks. Westerwelle recounted that he himself had had to answer questions about this article for ten days, explaining that the Germans were not "peace soldiers" while other countries provided the combat troops. He said it was important that German troops not be "relativized" and cast as second-class troops. He observed that Germany had originally deployed 3,500 troops, increased that mandate to 4,500, and was now planning an increase of another 500 plus a reserve. He emphasized that this was a major contribution compared with other European countries.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador noted that he had gained the impression in Afghanistan that police training was more challenging than he had originally understood. Troops were usually required to provide force protection. But German police training was the best.

¶ 6. (C) The Ambassador asked how the prospective February 26 Bundestag debate to extend the Bundeswehr mandate in Afghanistan would play out. Westerwelle said the question was how large a majority would approve the new mandate. He said that SPD caucus chief Steinmeier displayed good will on this issue. However, SPD chairman Gabriel wanted to politicize the issue for domestic political gain.

Nevertheless, he thought some in the SPD would support the new mandate. However, Westerwelle expected no support from the Greens. Westerwelle noted that the May NRW state elections were also affecting the issue in a negative way. That said, he said he could not see Steinmeier opposing the larger mandate. He hoped the Ambassador would speak with Steinmeier.

IRAN

¶ 7. (C) Asked about the February 5 visit of Iranian FM Mottaki to the Munich Security Conference, Westerwelle emphasized that he (Westerwelle) had not invited Mottaki to come to Germany, and Westerwelle had also not requested a meeting with Mottaki. Rather, it was Mottaki who was asking to see Westerwelle. Westerwelle said he had still not decided whether he would talk to Mottaki or not. He reflected concern that Tehran might try to exploit Mottaki's visit to Germany as a distraction, and continue executing people during the visit. In any case, Westerwelle said his position was exactly the same as the U.S. on Iran, and he would share the results of any meeting with Mottaki, if it took place.

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¶ 8. (C) Westerwelle said he would meet Russian FM Lavrov and (separately) Chinese FM Yang February 5. He suggested that Moscow had been changing course on Iran sanctions since the Qom revelations. The Russians now saw Iran as playing games on the nuclear issue. However, he observed that China was "hesitant," or even in opposition to sanctions. Reflecting on his recent visit to China, Westerwelle said he had not perceived any "good will" there at present. He said he would ask Yang again about Iran and then share the results with the U.S. Westerwelle opined that it was important also to focus on Brazil as an opinion leader in the Third World. He noted that President Lula had received Ahmadinejad warmly several months ago. He added that he was uncertain what the Saudis thought, but that the other Persian Gulf countries seemed to be in an existential panic about the Iranian nuclear program.

TAC NUKE

¶ 9. (C) Touching briefly on arms control, Westerwelle stated unequivocally that tactical nuclear weapons was an issue for NATO. He said that when he had received Kissinger, Schulz, Perry and Nunn on February 3 to talk about their global zero proposal, tactical nuclear weapons was not discussed. He said that the four statesmen were very supportive of President Obama.

TFTP

¶ 10. (C) The Ambassador raised the challenge of getting the European Parliament to approve an agreement to share data with the U.S. on tracking terrorist finance. The Ambassador noted the extensive efforts of the Treasury Department and other U.S. agencies to explain the importance of the program to our common security. He asked how one could get better support for the program. Westerwelle replied that the German government had been able to come up with a solution for itself a few months ago when the issue first surfaced.
(Comment: In fact, German Interior Minister de Maziere's vote

to abstain in the EU Council vote on TFTP on November 30 reflected the complete deadlock within the Coalition Government between TFTP advocates in the CDU-controlled Interior Ministry and TFTP opponents in the FDP-controlled Justice Ministry. End Comment.) However, Westerwelle said that now that the issue was in the European Parliament, he had no ability to influence it. He said that he was very, very aware of the Secretary's interest in this issue. Nevertheless, he had a sense that almost all groups in the European Parliament had concerns with the proposed agreement. He emphasized that this was not an issue that only concerned his party, the FDP, but rather many others as well.

¶11. (C) Westerwelle shared that he had not yet appointed a new Coordinator for German-American cooperation.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) Westerwelle (who spoke with ease in English) was in a buoyant mood and more confident on his issues than we have seen him so far. He seemed ready to defend any intimation that he was less than supportive of a troop surge (Defense Minister zu Guttenberg told the Ambassador two days ago that Westerwelle had worked for no increase of German troops for Afghanistan, see Berlin 157) with invocations of the importance of civilian reconstruction. On Iran, he leapt at the chance to tell us he had not invited Mottaki. His dodges on both tactical nuclear weapons and terrorist finance were all but practiced. His comment that he was unable to affect the vote in the EU Parliament on TFTP was a bit disingenuous; on February 4, an MFA official acknowledged to visiting Treasury officials in Berlin that German MEPs were in fact leading the charge against TFTP in the EU Parliament with the tacit support of the FDP, if not of specialists in the Justice Ministry and MFA themselves. Westerwelle still cuts a good image in meetings and in the press here, even though his party continues a bout of free fall in the polls. His ministry, though, still wonders (privately to us) where he gets his policy direction from. END COMMENT.

¶13. (U) The Ambassador did not have the chance to clear this cable before departing Berlin.

Murphy